

**THE CONFIDENTIAL LETTER COMPOSED BY
PROF. LAWRENCE SCHIFFMAN OF NEW YORK UNIVERSITY**

A Response

On August 29, 2008, Professor Lawrence Schiffman of New York University sent to one or more officials at his university a statement regarding my work on the Dead Sea Scrolls that is regrettably stamped with misleading claims regarding my research activities in this field of study. If I am responding to it only now, over two years later, that is because Dr. Schiffman did not inform me of the existence of this text but on the contrary warned in an introductory statement (p.1) that **“The text of this document and the information contained therein are strictly confidential and are intended only for the person(s) to whom it is addressed. It is forbidden to disclose it to anyone other than the addressee...”**

Despite this initial secrecy, the text in question is now a public document, and as such I am obliged to respond to the claims expressed in it. For every case the relevant page number of Schiffman’s text is given, with each claim being quoted verbatim and followed by my response.

A. Page 5. “Norman Golb has used a variety of methods, including threats, lawsuits, and use of the Internet to advance the claim that his point of view should be followed in these exhibits.” [By “these exhibits,” Schiffman is referring to a series of Dead Sea Scroll exhibits held in various science and other museums since 1993.]

Response:

It is Schiffman’s groundless claims that should matter to concerned parties. I have never employed threats of any sort, nor engaged in any lawsuits, in pursuing my work and publications on the Scrolls. I am also unaware of any writing of mine where the claim is advanced that my “point of view should be followed” in museum exhibits of the Scrolls. My critiques of the exhibits have specifically dealt with the question of their factuality as well as with the equally grave problem of one-sidedness in the approach taken to the question of the Scrolls’ identity and origin. I trust that Dr. Schiffman will at least explain what he means by this diatribe — at all events by adducing some shred of evidence supporting these secret claims.

B. P. 5: “In one episode, when, in an audio guide narrated by Robin [sic] McNeil, Jodi Magness of the University of North Carolina described some evidence as indicating why Norman Golb’s theory could not be correct, Golb sought to file a suit for libel against the M.H. de Young Memorial Museum in San Francisco, Magness, and even McNeil.”

Response: This assertion is false. There was indeed an audio guide for the San Francisco exhibition of the Scrolls, but it contained (among various dubious claims) the mistaken assertion by J. Magness that I had identified Khirbet Qumran (the supposed habitation of an ancient Jewish sect that various scholars believe possessed the Dead Sea Scrolls) as **“a Roman fort.”** In a memorandum to the museum I corrected Magness’s misguided attribution which Schiffman characterizes as “evidence.” In this memo, I pointed out that I had consistently identified this desert habitation, on the basis of its architecture and strategic position, as a Jewish fortress

originally built by the Hasmonaean (Maccabean) rulers. This identification has been widely supported by subsequent writers.

After a further exchange of correspondence, the museum removed the untruthful passage. There was never a “suit for libel,” nor any “threat.” As for the totally incorrect claim of Magness that I described Khirbet Qumran as a Roman fort, see pages 19 and 20 of my memorandum to the de Young Museum (15 April 1994), on-line at http://oi.uchicago.edu/pdf/deyoung_dss_exhibit_1994.pdf; other misrepresentations are noted throughout that memorandum, particularly at Part C .

C. P. 6: “I myself,” writes Schiffman, “have argued stridently against what I call the “Christianization” of the scrolls ... understood as some type of a pre- or proto Christian set of documents leading inexorably to the rise of Christianity. I believe that I have been successful in convincing the field that this was a serious methodological flaw.”

Response: Although Dr. Schiffman has indeed often argued in favor of the Jewish origin of the Scrolls, he here fails to inform his readers of the specific background of the idea. The emphasis on the Jewish origin of the Scrolls — against the effort to Christianize them — was earlier made by me at a lecture at the Albright Institute in Jerusalem in February 1970 (cf. *Jerusalem Post*, 9 June 1970, p. 4). This effort was thereafter continued in my article appearing in the *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* (Vol. 124, No. 1, February 1980, p 11), and in various subsequent articles, including one in *Les Annales* that sparked considerable international debate, and in my *Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls?* (Scribner, 1995/96). By the late 1980s, numerous scholars were fully recognizing the Jewish nature of the Scrolls.

In the final sentence of the above citation, Schiffman appears to be urging his readers to favor a claim he elsewhere makes. The claim is that his own emphasis on the Scrolls’ Jewish nature is, for three reasons that he enumerates — and that all seem to echo my own earlier published ideas — nothing short of “revolutionary” (his expression).¹ This claim preempts the earlier history. While Schiffman, by adducing his “success,” appears to be saying that this idea of the Jewishness of the Scrolls is his own creation, what he in fact has done is to contribute to an ongoing discussion.

¹ Cf. L. Schiffman, *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls*, JPSA, 1994, p. xxiv:

“Is this book revolutionary?”

“In light of the present scrolls mania, especially when it comes to exaggerated claims regarding Christianity, it is indeed revolutionary to propose *that the scrolls can be understood only in the context of Jewish history*.

“It is revolutionary to argue that *only by reading and examining a wide variety of texts from the scrolls collection can one even begin to discuss this topic*.

“And it is revolutionary to suggest that we should determine the scrolls’ origins *not through external evaluation and theoretical criteria, but rather through examination of the specific contents of the manuscripts*.

“...Through an honest and responsible examination of hundreds of tattered manuscripts, we will reconstruct the past of the Jewish people and their religious tradition, coming to a new understanding of the unique approach to God and humanity that the Jews have bequeathed to the world.” (*Italics are mine; they denote passages that appear to directly echo my earlier arguments in PAPS, 1980. NG*)

D. P. 8: “Let me state that there is absolutely no accusation of plagiarism in this article [by Avi Katzman in Haaretz, 1/29.1993]. In other words, the...claim that such accusations have now ‘resurfaced’ is nonsense, since no such accusation was ever made, not in the Katzman article nor in Norman Golb’s book in which he attacks me at length for everything else.” Schiffman later suggests (p. 10) that the issue originally raised by Katzman does “not, in fact, have anything to do with plagiarism as defined either in legal or academic circles.”

Response: In the above-mentioned articles, published between 1980 and 1992, I described the basic empirical evidence inevitably leading to the view that the Scrolls were of Jerusalem origin, and contained the writings of various groups. The evidence further made clear that the scrolls had no demonstrable connection with the popular whim or belief that a claimed Jewish sectarian group inhabited Khirbet Qumran. Apparently as a result of his acquaintance with these articles, the Israeli journalist Avi Katzman had come to the conclusion that certain of Dr. Schiffman’s ideas as expressed in his writings were in fact restatements of ideas earlier expressed by me. That is evidently why Katzman posed the following question to Schiffman in the course of his 1993 Hebrew interview with him, the pertinent passage of which I cite in English translation:

Katzman: But you also, in different articles that you published, have not hesitated to adopt portions of Golb’s theory without acknowledging as much, and without giving him appropriate credit.

Schiffman: This isn’t the issue. There’s no innovation in Golb’s theory.... Golb can say what he wants. The idea we’re not dealing with a sect is self-evident..... (Musaf Haaretz, *ibid.*, p. 50.)

While stating that “there is absolutely no accusation of plagiarism” in Katzman’s article, Schiffman fails, in his communication with NYU officials, to divulge the relevant question posed by Katzman to him, namely why he did not hesitate to “adopt portions of Golb’s theory without acknowledging as much....” Quoting Katzman’s query would obviously have allowed the university officials to evaluate the accuracy of Schiffman’s statements in light of their policy on such matters. Schiffman restricts himself only to the mention of *other matters* discussed in the Katzman interview. Other questions were of course posed to Schiffman by Katzman during the interview, but Schiffman refrains from quoting the salient question asked by Katzman.

Regarding Schiffman’s claim that I attacked him “**for everything else,**” readers may judge for themselves whether there is any substance to this statement by consulting my critique of his views available at pp. 191-215 of my *Who Wrote the Dead Sea Scrolls?*.

E. P. 8: “We will not get into the question here as to whether Qumran could have been a fortress. Suffice it to say that the presence of a guard tower does not make any form of building complex a fortress. Further, the archaeological claims made by Golb and later by Y. Hirschfeld..., I. Magen and Y. Peleg... in this regard cannot be sustained on objective scientific grounds.”

Response: Schiffman does not explain what these “objective scientific grounds” are that supposedly refute the “archaeological claims” made earlier by me and thereafter in more detailed and substantive archaeological form by Hirschfeld, Magen, and Peleg; he appears to assume that

readers of his communication will take his word for it. As professional archaeologists, Hirschfeld, Magen and Peleg all owe their reputations to many detailed on-site identifications followed by equally meticulous research publications. It is the case that some scholars still deeply committed to the theory of a religious sect at Qumran, including Schiffman, are unhappy with our conclusions. Such unhappiness, however, does not amount to an “objective scientific basis” for rejecting the conclusions arrived at.

With respect to the identification of Khirbet Qumran as a fortress per se, this was perceived already by early explorers long before our own time, and not by any means, as Schiffman asserts, on the basis of the tower alone. Père de Vaux himself, the first actual excavator of Kh.Qumran, while speaking of the “solidly built tower” whose builders were “especially preoccupied with considerations of defence” (*Archaeology and the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 1973, pp. 5 and 6) also frankly recognized the strategic nature of the site *according to its geographic position*. In addition, he and his colleagues recognized that when Roman troops attacked the Jewish forces stationed there, “the tower bore the brunt of the battle.” These earlier developments and the specific nature of the architectural characteristics as a whole led me to identify the site as a fortress built by the Hasmonaean rulers. Despite the indignation of some writers, this is the view adopted by most scholars today on the basis of the actual empirical evidence.

The totality of evidence was presented in painstaking detail in the official Israel Antiquities Authority reports of Magen and Peleg, based on a full decade of research at the Kh. Qumran site. Sweeping away this evidence with a flat “cannot be sustained on objective scientific grounds” admonition appears to amount to little more than hearsay or an earlier belief based on insufficient empirical findings — something remote from the reasoned discourse that should always accompany advanced research endeavors.

F. p. 2: “It is important to understand that this action [of slander and controversy] is part of a campaign against Dead Sea Scrolls scholars that has been going on now for over two years in connection with Dead Sea Scrolls exhibits at San Diego and Raleigh, North Carolina. They have finally decided to go after me. Previous to that, Professor Golb himself conducted a sustained attack in the media, in a series of letters and even in lawsuits...”

Response: My analyses of the exhibits have always taken, and will continue to take, the form of discussions whose language is perfectly ordinary in the context of critical academic debate. Cf. the various articles so far published at <http://oi.uchicago.edu/research/projects/scr>

While over the years I have published several items in the press pointing to erroneous claims in certain of the American exhibitions of the Scrolls, I’m unaware of conducting a “sustained attack in the media.” When Dr. Schiffman adds the revelation that I have written “a series of letters,” he does not specify what he means by this remark. I infer, however, that he is in fact alluding not to “attacks” but to correspondence of mine in which I have signaled errors and misleading statements made in museum exhibits. If Dr. Schiffman wished to suggest to his colleagues that it is inappropriate of me to correspond with museums regarding errors in their exhibits, then he might have said so directly.

(As for the recurrent innuendo concerning “lawsuits,” see item A above.)

G. P. 3: “...Golb argued at times that the scrolls constituted mainly the library of the Jerusalem Temple.” At this point Schiffman inserts a footnote which reads: “**N. Golb, ‘On the Jerusalem Origin of the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Military Nature of the Khirbet Qumran Site’ [Presentation] Jerusalem, International Dead Sea Scrolls Conference (23 July, 1997), 2.”**

Response: Schiffman’s statement is false. I never proposed that the Scrolls were mainly from the Jerusalem Temple, never read a paper to that effect at the 1997 Scrolls conference, and never distributed any pages containing such a text. The truth is quite different.

While I had *intended* to give a talk at that International Scrolls Conference on the subject of the Scrolls and the military nature of the site — which talk itself would have included *nothing* about the Temple library — this lecture was cancelled at my request because of a sensational announcement and international press release by the Israel Museum to the effect that a new text discovery, in the form of a pottery piece (i.e., an ostrakon) unearthed at Kh. Qumran, disproved my view that the Scrolls came from Jerusalem libraries.

The talk that I did give, and at which Dr. Schiffman was demonstrably present (cf. *Haaretz*, 24 July 1997) along with approximately 500 other scholars and a Reuters photographer who recorded the entire scene, focused on this sensational announcement of the museum, and demonstrated by magnification of the so-called “discovery” on a large auditorium screen that its wording revealed no support whatever for the claim being promulgated by the museum. Dr. Ada Yardeni, Israel’s leading palaeographer, with the support of her distinguished colleague Yoseph Naveh, criticized the museum’s claim and afterwards published articles against it, as did I and others. The claimants to this “discovery” had presented a *false transcription* of the crucial word on the pottery piece — a transcription that did not accurately represent the original strokes of that word.

The falsehood was also exposed in the *Haaretz* newspaper. It remains one of the more egregious efforts of traditional Scroll scholars to muster up some form of empirical evidence that a sect lived at Khirbet and wrote or studied scrolls there. But in almost cinematic form the effort backfired, its unmasking clearly aggravating already-present doubts among a substantial number of scholars regarding the “sect” theory. These doubts would eventually be reflected in the proceedings of the now-famous archaeological conference on the Scrolls held at Brown University in 2002 — a conference that itself spurred still further opposition to the traditional theory, particularly after the proceedings were published by Brill in 2006.

The main feature of the Brown conference was the report of Magen and Peleg describing their decade-long examination of the Kh. Qumran site, with their conclusion that the excavation evidence uncovered was consistent with identification of the site as initially a Hasmonaean fortress that, after its expansion under King Herod, took on a pottery-manufacturing component. They further emphasized that the site produced no evidence at all of Essene or other sectarian habitation.

With respect to the Scrolls themselves, the ultimate conclusion of the archaeologists was that “we have brought the site down from the unwarranted height to which it had been raised by various scholars so that it may serve their scientific interests, and placed it firmly on the somewhat mundane ground of the Second Temple period and the destruction of Jerusalem.” (Magen and Peleg in Galor, Humbert and Zangenberg [eds.], *Qumran: the Site of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Brill 2006, p. 113.)

The view thus expressed, as well as the late Prof. Yizhar Hirschfeld’s earlier statements to similar effect (cf. e.g. his *Qumran in Context* [Hendrickson, 2004], *passim*), were thus fully supportive of my earlier formulated theory that the Scrolls originated in Jerusalem libraries and were sequestered in the caves due to the ongoing war and the Roman siege on the capital. Scholars still clinging to forms of the Qumran-Sectarian theory may well be unhappy at the new developments; in any event, they do not appear ready to *debate* the basic issues with their opponents, for example in forums that would include not only archaeologists and students of the Scrolls but also classical historians and other scholars of ancient history with an understanding of basic principles of empirical historical research — where participants and the general public might be able to gain a better understanding of the present controversy over the origin and significance of the Scrolls.

H. (p. 3): “(Golb) saw the enigmatic Copper Scroll as referring to additional caches of hidden scrolls.”

Response: In the above statement, use of the word “enigmatic” is, if not fallacious, at all events highly misleading. When I reopened the study of the Copper Scroll with my 1980 Philosophical Society article, I emphasized that it was not at all “enigmatic.” At present — i.e., some three decades later — hardly anyone doing serious work on this text considers it to be an enigma. (Cf. Brooke and Davies, eds., *Copper Scroll Studies*, Sheffield 2002 [=published deliberations of Copper Scroll conference held in Manchester in 1996]). This scroll is described as “enigmatic” primarily by the most doctrinaire Qumranologists — precisely because, should it be acknowledged by them to be an authentic document, it would render transparent the difficulties involved in sustaining their “Essene-Sectarian” interpretation of Scroll origins. Nor did I “see” the text “as referring” to hidden caches. The Copper Scroll’s twelve columns of writing, found in Cave 3 along with other scrolls, specifically include sixty passages describing deposits of valuable items that were hidden away in multiple places in the Judaean Wilderness. Without empirical proofs to bolster their claim, the arbitrary efforts of the aforesaid group to cast doubt on the authenticity of the Copper Scroll are not credible.

I. (p. 3) “This theory [of Golb’s] is itself dependent on the works of others and on assumptions widely shared in the field of Dead Sea Scroll studies. It was pointed out already in 1955 by H.F.D. Sparks that the Dead Sea Scrolls should not be seen as the literature of only one sect, and that they reflected a wider perspective on Palestinian Judaism because, in Sparks’ view, the Qumran sectarians had gathered into their library the works of other earlier and related groups.”

Response:

To begin with, while all scholarship, in any field, is “dependent” on the work of one’s predecessors, what matters is whether their ideas are acknowledged by others through appropriate footnotes (and not merely in bibliographies), which I trust I have consistently supplied. However, the view that the Scrolls have no organic connection with Khirbet Qumran, but were the writings of many different Jewish groups, was first expressed by me in published form in 1980. If this idea has shifted into “assumptions widely shared,” that is obviously because various scholars have subsequently come to support one or another variant of the idea. Scholarly writings on the Scrolls before the mid-1980s, including Schiffman’s (for which cf. any bibliography of his writings), contain no evidence of such “assumptions.”

The four most essential features of my interpretation of Scroll origins have consistently been the following: (a) they were from Jerusalem libraries, and represent the writings of many Jewish groups; (b) they were hidden in the caves by refugees fleeing the Roman siege of the city in 70 A.D.; (c) no empirical evidence, to this day, warrants the belief that a religious sect wrote or copied books at Kh. Qumran or inhabited that site; and (d) the theory of bookish sectarians inhabiting Qumran is a fiction of scholarship.

Since publication of my first article on the subject in the aforementioned *Proceedings* (1980), various traditional Qumranologists have shifted their position to include the acknowledgement that “many” or “most” of the Scrolls derive from Jerusalem, or as some have metaphorically claimed, from “elsewhere.” These symbiotically expressed views of traditional Scroll scholars, in which they fail to explain the origins of their newfound interpretation, are the actual “assumptions widely shared,” and whose provenience Schiffman so glibly distorts. These new claims demonstrably arose in the wake of my own earlier studies of the Scrolls’ origins, where one may find the first fundamental arguments pointing to the origin of the Scrolls in Jerusalem’s libraries.

Prof. Karl Rengstorff theorized that *Jerusalem Priests*, rather than Essenes, were the ones who *inhabited Qumran* and engaged in literary pursuits there. In my writings on the Scrolls, I of course gave him due credit for arguing that the texts represent a wide variety of ancient Jewish thinking; I also criticized his substitution of the notion of Essenes at Qumran with the equally unfounded notion of a group of priests sojourning there. As for Rev. Sparks, his brief 1955 note, which appeared in England’s *Journal of Theological Studies*, focuses on the “*books of the Qumran community*,” encouraging scholars not to assume that all the Scrolls possessed by those whom he called “the Essene Community” were written by Essenes. In this way, while still accepting the notion of a sectarian religious community based at Khirbet Qumran, he anticipated the “assumptions widely shared” that developed decades later in ignorance of his note — and in awareness of the problems I had raised with the standard version of the Essene theory. Sparks’s insight was unknown to me until I saw it mentioned in Schiffman’s confidential letter. Expressed in but a few pages of an English theological journal, it never became a subject of discussion among Qumranologists or their students. In his 1994 book Schiffman himself does not discuss

Sparks or his relationship to claimed “assumptions widely shared.” Nor, in fact, does he discuss Rengstorf.

With the chronology of events now clarified, the above summary should help place Schiffman’s suggestion that my interpretation of Scroll origins **“is dependent on the works of others and on assumptions widely shared...”** in its proper locus.

J. Schiffman states (P. 4) that **“...the presence of biblical texts and apocryphal texts ...makes it obvious to anyone that the scrolls contain more than the works of one particular sect. This point was made strongly in a review that I wrote that appeared in 1980...”**

Response: In the review in question, of a volume edited primarily by J.T. Milik dealing particularly with phylacteries (leather boxes containing Biblical passages, and found among the Scrolls and elsewhere), Schiffman states (p. 171) that “In some of the variations of Jewish legal matters between Rabbinic sources and the Qumran texts, the sect simply represents an older practice.... In these cases the law recorded at Qumran was probably the practice of all Jews in the Second Commonwealth period.”

That however is an entirely different matter than stating that the phylactery texts found at Qumran were themselves the writings of *various Jewish groups of that time*. Schiffman here refers to “the sect,” and there is no indication whatever in this review (*Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 100.2 [1980], p. 171) that at that time he conceived of either the phylactery texts found in the Qumran caves, or the Scrolls as such, as being the *variegated writings of different groups of Jews*. (That Schiffman published his review several months after my American Philosophical article had appeared is somewhat irrelevant insofar as he apparently never admits to knowledge of that 1980 article.)

K. Schiffman further states (p. 4, note 9) that **“this [same] conclusion is clear from my study of the Sabbath Songs found at Qumran and Masada.... The article was submitted before Golb addressed these issues....”**

Response: As in the case of the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* article adduced by Schiffman, there is in fact nothing whatever within the 33 pages of his “Sabbath Songs” article — entitled “Merkavah Speculation at Qumran...” and published in the Alexander Altmann Festschrift entitled *Mystics, Philosophers and Politicians* (Durham, 1982) — which supports this claim. After translating and discussing some of these very interesting “Sabbath Songs,” Schiffman concludes this rather early article by stating that **“*the Dead Sea sect* (my italics) **must now be considered a possible source for merkavah mysticism as it developed in tannaitic Judaism.**”** It was only *some years later* that, according to the written record, he adopted my view that the “Songs,” discovered both in the Qumran caves and at Masada, pointed not to a specific sectarian provenience of the Scrolls but to their complex and multifarious origins. (On

this matter, cf. my 1980 Philosophical Society article, pp. 9-10, and Schiffman's subsequent and similarly expressed view in his *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls* (1994), p. 355.)

L. Schiffman states “...considerably before Golb wrote any of his works, I had called attention to the wide nature of the Qumran library and also to the fact that the Essene identification of the Qumran sect was greatly mistaken in that it was oversimplified.... My own theory is radically different from Golb's, and I advocated, especially after 1984, a completely different theory....”

Response: Schiffman here calls the attention of the NYU officials to his doctoral dissertation and related book entitled *Halakhah at Qumran* (Brill, 1975), where his concluding chapter is entitled “Halakhah and the Identity of the Sect.” In this book his final observation (p. 136) is that “*the sect still cannot be identified with any previously known group. The Qumran sect had affinities with the Pharisaic and Essene traditions, yet its separate identity must be recognized....*” This statement does not match Schiffman's above claim; no passage in this book speaks about a “wide nature of the Qumran library” or about the “oversimplification” of the Essene theory.

To the best of my knowledge, Schiffman began to describe the Essene theory as an “oversimplification” only in his 1983 book *Sectarian Law in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Scholars Press). Even in this volume, however, he continues to describe the claimed inhabitants of Kh. Qumran as members of a single “sect” but, as he explains, not likely to have been the Essenes per se. (On the problematics of an overarching sectarian identification of the Scrolls as a whole, and of the Essene conundrum in particular, cf. my earlier article in *PAPS*, 1980, pp. 1 ff.) Several years would pass before Schiffman rejected his earlier interpretation of Scroll origins altogether in favor of a new revelation that the inhabitants of Kh. Qumran were *really Sadducees* and not Essenes — and that they *gathered the writings of various Jewish groups or multiple Judaisms*. In the latter respect, his theory is not at all different from the one I first presented in 1970 and published in 1980 and following years. In fact, the concept of multiplicity of doctrines and ideas in the Scrolls lies at the core of my theory of Scroll origins. The basic concept can, of course, be nuanced through the imaginative “gathering” of all the Scrolls by a sect at Khirbet Qumran — even though there is no empirical evidence of such a phenomenon having occurred. Schiffman's explanation fails to address the actual history of investigation of this topic, nor even to acknowledge that not a single Scroll has ever been found within Khirbet Qumran.

To judge from the published texts, Schiffman began developing his newer idea on the Scrolls, and on the character of the Khirbet Qumran site itself, *only after my first several articles on the origin and nature of the Scrolls (1980-1987) had appeared*. (A characteristic piece of this nature was his article delivered at the Groningen conference on the Scrolls [1989] and published in 1990 in the proceedings of that conference.) According to the written record, it was approximately at that time that he began joining forces with other traditional Qumranologists in expressing the view that the Scrolls have “an enormous amount to tell us about the widely varying Judaisms of the Hasmonaean and Herodian periods” (*Bible Review* VI, no. 5, Oct. 1990,

p. 24). This assertion was followed, in the same article (pp. 25-26), by misrepresentations regarding my studies of Scroll origins. Examples: **“According to [N.G.]... the Qumran scrolls are the library of the Jerusalem Temple.... Despite the aggressive way in which he has argued for this theory, he has never supported it by a study...of the texts themselves. Indeed, he ignores the evidence we have cited.... the settlement at Qumran was constructed in much too unsteady a manner to be a fortress...”**

Pace Dr. Schiffman, I have never stated that the Scrolls are “the library of the Jerusalem Temple,” have carefully studied, and continue to teach, “the texts themselves,” have not ignored the “evidence” he cites, but have responded in detail to that so-called “evidence” and have yet to learn which statements made by me in the course of writing on this topic may be considered “aggressive.” His claim about the “unsteady” nature of the Khirbet Qumran fortress, now appearing in his confidential document as an assertion that the site’s identification as a fortress **“cannot be sustained on objective scientific grounds,”** is useless without substantive evidence or at least some semblance of inductive logic. For the proofs that Kh. Qumran was indeed a Hasmonaean fortress, cf. the detailed archaeological evidence presented by Magen and Peleg in their above-mentioned writings. As far as ordinary human perception goes, it would appear that the effort to rhetorically discredit the recent archaeological findings has more than a little to do with the traditional, albeit unfounded, claim that Khirbet Qumran was the site of a sectarian settlement.

Appendix: Other Statements in the Schiffman Confidential Letter

1. Schiffman (henceforth S.) states (p. 5) that he was a member of the “organizing committee of the conference commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Dead Sea Scrolls, held at the Shrine of the Book of the Israel Museum in July, 2008.” He states that the committee **“decided not to involve Golb in the program,”** and that **“some others with dissident theories were invited, but declined to attend.”**

Response: S. does not define what he means by a scroll “dissident.” By the standards of Qumranological belief set by Père de Vaux and his original team in the 1950s, most scholars of the subject today are dissidents, with many nuanced theories crowding the Internet. What S. apparently means by his statement is that *any* scholar who professes belief that there was, for at least some period of time, no matter how long or short, an actual religious sect either inhabiting Kh. Qumran or that was living somewhere in its vicinity, and whose identification one may either know or not know, and whose members either fled from Jerusalem or did not, is entitled to be anointed a non-dissident and to attend meetings where he and his colleagues lecture to one another. The position of S. and his fellow believers is thus that those scholars who do not accept these ideas of the traditional Qumranologists may or may not be allowed to lecture at meetings on the Scrolls, depending on the good grace of the traditionalists.

2. S. asserts (p.7) that Golb “does not receive invitations” to speak at Scroll lecture series because he employs “confrontational, aggressive, strong-arm tactics,” and because he “gives the same lecture over and over.”

Response: This statement seems to imply that S. wishes me not to speak at museum exhibitions of the Scrolls since I don’t agree with the efforts of traditional Scroll scholars to protect the old theory and its variations. According to my files, I’m constantly revising those lectures on the Scrolls which I have been delivering for many years at various meetings here and abroad (but not, of course, meetings controlled by supporters of the Qumran-Sectarian theory and its variations). As for “confrontational” etc. tactics that S. attributes to me, it would be better for him to adduce but a single verifiable report describing such actions. I’m quite sure that scholars presently rejecting the concept of a sect at Qumran and supporting the theory of Jerusalem origin of the Scrolls would be pleased to debate their opponents in an entirely collegial manner on this subject, as we have consistently done in the past when opportunities to do so have presented themselves.

3. S. asserts, along the same lines (p.9), that Golb, in his book, **“was really arguing that his theory, rejected virtually unanimously by other scholars, should receive equal billing with the dominant view.”**

Response: There are no such arguments in my writings on the Scrolls. What I have stated is that museum exhibits of the Scrolls should be balanced in their visual and audio presentations of the actual *evidence*. Although the accumulation of empirical and historical evidence now points to Jerusalem as the home of the Scrolls, as emphasized most recently by participants in the Israel Antiquities Authority investigations, there is still at present no one “dominant view” of Scroll origins. That is why the most recent major exhibition of the Scrolls, at the Bibliothèque Nationale, refrains from as much as suggesting the idea of a dominant or leading interpretation — even though it was French scholars who were the ones mainly responsible for the early and wide promulgation of the original Qumran-Sectarian theory.

S. here and throughout his confidential letter fails to address the topic of possible non-academic influence upon museums and other institutions that may result in the appearance of what he calls a “dominant view” of Scroll origins.

4. S. asserts (p.9) that **“views with which [Golb] agreed and that were espoused by myself and other scholars ... were increasingly represented in the ... exhibits and in the lecture series surrounding them.”**

Response: Schiffman’s wording is clearly disingenuous; as shown by the written record, the “espousal” which he describes was delivered by him and other traditional Qumranologists in the wake of my first several articles on the Scrolls — not the other way around.

Of greater concern is the fact that, besides leaving NYU officials in the dark as to which particular lectures he might be alluding, Schiffman here in effect suggests that there is nothing inappropriate about keeping lectures and debates on the Scrolls under the control *of a particular group of scholars who oppose the ideas of certain other scholars*. This bizarre view of academic debate, while helping to explain Schiffman's apparent need to make use of highly questionable assertions in his confidential letter to the NYU administration, is obviously contrary to the free and open pursuit of scholarship, and illustrates the need for careful consideration of the possible causes underlying current efforts to protect the core beliefs of traditional Qumranologists.

Throughout the above-described efforts as well as others continuing until the present time, no bona fide material evidence has yet emerged from the research of either Dr. Schiffman or his Qumranological colleagues demonstrating that a Jewish sect inhabited the Khirbet Qumran site. The wide effort being made at present to inculcate this idea into the minds of students and the general reading public is, regrettably, still being accompanied by suppression of debate on a topic of genuine humanistic interest. It is also being accompanied by misleading use of empirical data and, as exemplified throughout Schiffman's confidential document, by the distortion of present-day scholarly views on the Scrolls and misrepresentation of the history of their interpretation.

Norman Golb

30 Nov. 2010